

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUND NO. 5-5535
JOHN ROBERTS/NAIROBI

FEBRUARY 16, 1978

RHODESIA, LAND-TRANSFER AND THE KENYAN EXAMPLE

ANNCR:

AS EFFORTS CONTINUE TO MOVE TOWARD BLACK MAJORITY RULE IN RHODESIA, ONE OF THE MAIN PROBLEMS IS HOW TO INSURE THAT RHODESIAN BLACKS REAP THE BENEFITS OF INDEPENDENCE WHILE AT THE SAME TIME REASSURING WHITES THAT THEY WILL NOT SUDDENLY LOSE EVERYTHING THEY HAVE. VOA CORRESPONDENT JOHN ROBERTS SAYS THAT, INEVITABLY, COMPARISONS ARE BEING DRAWN WITH THE EXPERIENCE IN KENYA IN THE 1960S WHERE BRITAIN AND BLACK LEADERS ACHIEVED AN ORDERLY TRANSITION WITH A MINIMUM OF UPHEAVAL. MR. ROBERTS SENDS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT:

VOICE:

ONE OF THE MAJOR FACTORS IN THE TRANSITION PROCESS IN KENYA WAS A UNIQUE AND LENGTHY PROGRAM TO HANDLE ONE OF THE TOUCHIEST PROBLEMS FACED BY THE OUTGOING COLONIAL AUTHORITIES. THAT WAS THE TRANSFER OF THE RICH, COLONIAL FARMING REGION CALLED THE WHITE HIGHLANDS TO BLACK HANDS. THE PROGRAM WHICH WAS CALLED "THE MILLION ACRES SETTLEMENT SCHEME" IS NOW NEARING A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION AND MAY HOLD SOME LESSONS FOR RHODESIA.

ONE OF THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE HISTORIC MAU MAU REVOLT IN KENYA IN THE 1950S WAS THE FACT THAT MANY BLACK KENYANS WERE LAND-HUNGRY. IN 1961, AS BRITAIN WAS NEGOTIATING WITH BLACK LEADERS OVER THE COMING INDEPENDENCE JUST TWO YEARS AWAY, IT WAS CLEAR THAT SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE ABOUT TRANSFERRING WHITE-OWNED LAND TO AFRICANS. BUT IT HAD TO BE DONE IN A WAY THAT WOULD NOT DAMAGE THE NATIONAL ECONOMY WHICH WAS HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON AGRICULTURE.

A LAND TRANSFER PLAN WAS WORKED OUT INVOLVING SOME THREE THOUSAND PROSPEROUS FARMS IN THE WHITE HIGHLANDS. BRITAIN

WOULD PROVIDE MONEY FOR LOANS AND GRANTS TO ENABLE BLACKS TO BUY SMALL HOLDINGS. PRICES WERE SET BY A NO-NONSENSE (BUSINESS-LIKE) TEAM OF BRITISH EVALUATORS. THERE WAS NO COMPULSION TO SELL. BOTH SELLER AND BUYER HAD TO BE WILLING TO ENTER THE TRANSACTION. PROVISIONS WERE MADE FOR NEW BLACK LAND OWNERS TO REGISTER TITLES TO THEIR LAND.

AT FIRST THE PLAN WAS ANGRILY CRITICIZED BY WHITES, AND ONE OUTRAGED BRITISH COLONEL WRAPPED UP HIS MEDALS AND SENT THEM TO THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND IN PROTEST. BUT THOSE WHO PREDICTED FAILURE AND THE COLLAPSE OF KENYA'S AGRICULTURE WERE PROVED WRONG. TODAY NEARLY 500-THOUSAND AFRICANS HAVE BEEN SETTLED IN THE FORMER WHITE HIGHLANDS, MOSTLY ON SMALL PLOTS OF LAND. ABOUT NINETY PERCENT OF THE FARMS, MOST COFFEE PLANTATIONS AND MANY CATTLE RANCHES ARE NOW IN BLACK HANDS, AND THE OWNERS OF THE FORTY OR SO WHITE FARMS STILL LEFT HAVE UNTIL MARCH OF 1979 TO DECIDE WHETHER THEY WANT TO SELL. LAST YEAR KENYA HAD AN ALL-TIME RECORD IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, EXPORT PERFORMANCE AND EARNINGS, MUCH OF IT ATTRIBUTED TO RESOURCEFUL BLACK FARMERS IN THE NEW BLACK HIGHLANDS.

EXPERTS BELIEVE THE SCHEME WAS SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE IT WAS BEGUN BEFORE INDEPENDENCE, AND BOTH WHITES AND BLACKS COULD SEE IT WAS WORKING. WHITE FARMERS WERE ABLE TO PLAN FOR THEIR FUTURES, AND BLACKS COULD SEE SOLID EVIDENCE THAT LAND OWNERSHIP WAS WITHIN THEIR GRASP.

THERE ARE OBVIOUS DIFFERENCES BETWEEN KENYA IN THE 1960S AND RHODESIA NEARLY 14-YEARS LATER. THERE ARE MANY MORE FARMERS IN RHODESIA THAN THERE WERE IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE KENYA, AND RHODESIA IS FACING AN INTERNAL GUERRILLA WAR AND MOUNTING INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE TO REACH AN AGREEMENT WITH ALL BLACK GROUPS. BUT OBSERVERS IN NAIROBI BELIEVE THE KENYA EXPERIENCE MAY WELL

BE RELEVANT TO RHODESIA WHERE MAINTENANCE OF WHITE CONFIDENCE IS SEEN AS CRUCIAL TO AN ORDERLY TRANSITION TO MAJORITY RULE.

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PLAN FOR AN OVERALL RHODESIAN SETTLEMENT CALLS FOR A ZIMBABWE DEVELOPMENT FUND OF UP TO 15-HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS BUT RATHER THAN USING THE MONEY TO BUY OUT WHITES, THE INTENTION THERE IS TO CREATE ECONOMIC STABILITY TO INDUCE WHITES TO STAY AND HELP BUILD UP THE ECONOMY.

HOWEVER THE QUESTION OF LAND TRANSFER REMAINS A CRITICAL ONE IN THE MINDS OF MANY RHODESIAN FARMERS. PEOPLE STILL INVOLVED IN THE LAND SETTLEMENT SCHEME IN KENYA HAVE SUGGESTED THAT THE KENYAN GOVERNMENT MIGHT CONSIDER INVITING BLACK AND WHITE RHODESIAN REPRESENTATIVES FOR AN ON THE SPOT LOOK AT THE KENYAN EXPERIENCE IN TURNING THE WHITE HIGHLANDS BLACK.

GH/PY